

PHILIPPINES

MORE THAN 7,000 ISLANDS and islets rise from a partly submerged mountain chain to form the Philippines. Largely tropical wilderness, 90 percent of the islands are uninhabited, 60 percent unnamed. Two-thirds of the population lives on the two largest islands, Luzon and Mindanao.

Predominantly of Malay origin, Filipinos trace their origins as far back as 3000 B.C., to the first immigrants from Indonesia and Malaya. Hillsides terraced with rice fields bear witness to ancient engineering skills.

In the 14th century Arab missionaries brought Islam to the Sulus and other southern islands. The Christian influence dates from 1521, when Magellan landed on Cebu, opening the way for Spanish colonization in 1565. Spain's rule lasted 333 years, ending with the Spanish-American War. The United States guided the Philippines during the next 48 years, leaving a heritage of language and liberty. The nation became fully independent on July 4, 1946.

GOVERNMENT: Republic. **LAND AREA:** 115,830 square miles, about the size of Arizona, extending 1,150 miles north and south, the sweep of Washington, Oregon, and California combined. **POPULATION:** 32,600,000, mainly of Malay stock. **LANGUAGE:** Officially Pilipino (Tagalog), English (spoken by 40%), Spanish, 80-odd native dialects. **RELIGION:** 83% Roman Catholic; Aglipayan (an independent Christian sect), Moslem, Protestant minorities. **ECONOMY:** Copra, sugar, abaca, lumber, fishing, gold, lead, manganese, iron, copper, chromite. **CITIES:** Manila, port, industrial center (pop. 1,339,000); Quezon City (Manila suburb); capital: Baguio, summer capital; Pasay; Cebu. **CLIMATE:** Hot, humid, heavy rainfall.

0 50 100 STATUTE MILES

Elevations in Feet Soundings in Fathoms
Places with Scheduled Air Service Major Battles: Land Sea

Major Battles: Land Sea

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Balabac Strait

CHINA
TAIWAN (FORMOSA)
Hainan Is.
THAILAND
VIET NAM
CAMBODIA
BRUNEI
SINGAPORE
MALAYSIA
INDONESIA
INDIAN OCEAN

Pacific Ocean
Mindanao
Luzon
Philippines

Borneo
Cebe
Java
Timor
Australia

SULAWESI
SABAH
MELAKA
INDONESIA

South China Sea

Guinea

Philippines

Ocean Mindanao

Indonesia

Philippines

still keep that idealism from flowering fully.

Far more than wars and occupation, geography has fragmented the Republic of the Philippines. Its 32,600,000 people live on a galaxy of islands, strung out north and south for 1,150 miles between the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea (maps, pages 312-13).

No one knows how many islands there are. The republic itself says simply, "more than 7,100." New islands appear from time to time as volcanoes thrust their smoking cones above the sea. And, after a few years of pounding by the waves, some of these new islands vanish.

The eruption of Taal Volcano on September 28, 1965, emphasized again the influence of natural forces on life in the Philippines. The volcano, rising as an island in Lake Taal, 40 miles south of Manila, roared for three days and blasted out untold tons of mud and glowing pumice (pages 306-7). Fields and houses were buried under siltlike ash. Two hundred people lost their lives, and thousands of homeless on the island and around the lake were sent to relief centers.

My wife wanted to get away, but I wanted to watch a little longer. The eruptions were not very strong at first.

"About half an hour later, a deafening blast shook the island. It was time to leave."

Comdo Andal jammed 20 women and children into the same small boat we were using. They started north, away from the volcano's eruption center. They had traveled about two and a half miles when another explosion split the night.

"There was a big volume of gas and steam," Mr. Andal said. "That was when the storm and electrical display started. It was just like Roman candles—flashes of red and yellow."

The eruption, possibly triggered by seepage of water from the lake into the depths of the earth, created its own thunderstorm. Billions of gallons of water, steam, gas, and mud churning into the air.

Mr. Andal remembered shouting to boatloads of refugees from the island to head north. "I was afraid of the big waves that would come," he told us. His warnings could not be heard in the noisy night. Many of the volcano's victims drowned when seismic waves engulfed their overloaded boats.

On September 30, 1965, Taal spewed up a black cinder cone 1,000 feet in diameter. It formed a horseshoe islet visible in inlet at upper right, page 307). Whisps of steam still escaped from the cone near the water line as we climbed its gently sloping side and had a picnic lunch on the rim.



Crater-pocked time bomb, Taal Volcano rises from the new crater in the inlet. Steam shot a thousand feet aloft, spreading debris so thick that it buried scores of the cataclysm's 200 victims and their flourishing stands of coconut and banana. Two days later the volcano still belched (inset).